

The Pioneer Saga of the PRICE/MYTON ROAD

In the early development of the Uintah Basin of Eastern Utah no other road played a more important role than did the Price/Myton Road through historic Nine-Mile Canyon and the Wells Draw. Built over an authentic Indian trail, the road was carved out of some of the roughest of God's great handiwork by the 9th Cavalry in 1886. These early soldiers would build Fort Duchesne. Though most of the Fort has been dismantled, its legacy has remained with us since its closure in 1912. This is only a small part. The saga of the Price/Myton Road grew as the 'Basin' grew. Feeding an infant expansion, the road commands much of every facet of growth, legend, and human involvement. A prominent historian of this region has said, "I could write three books on the Price/Myton freighters alone, not to mention everything else." (George E. Stewart)

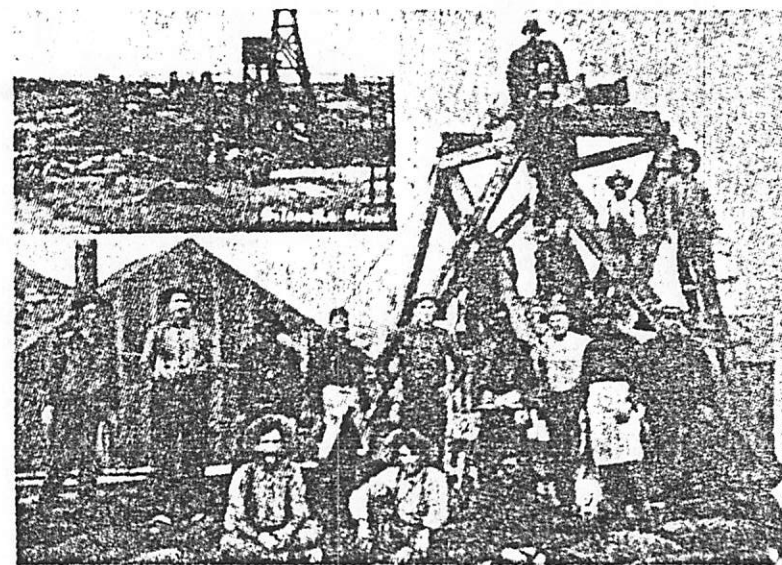
Courtesy of the UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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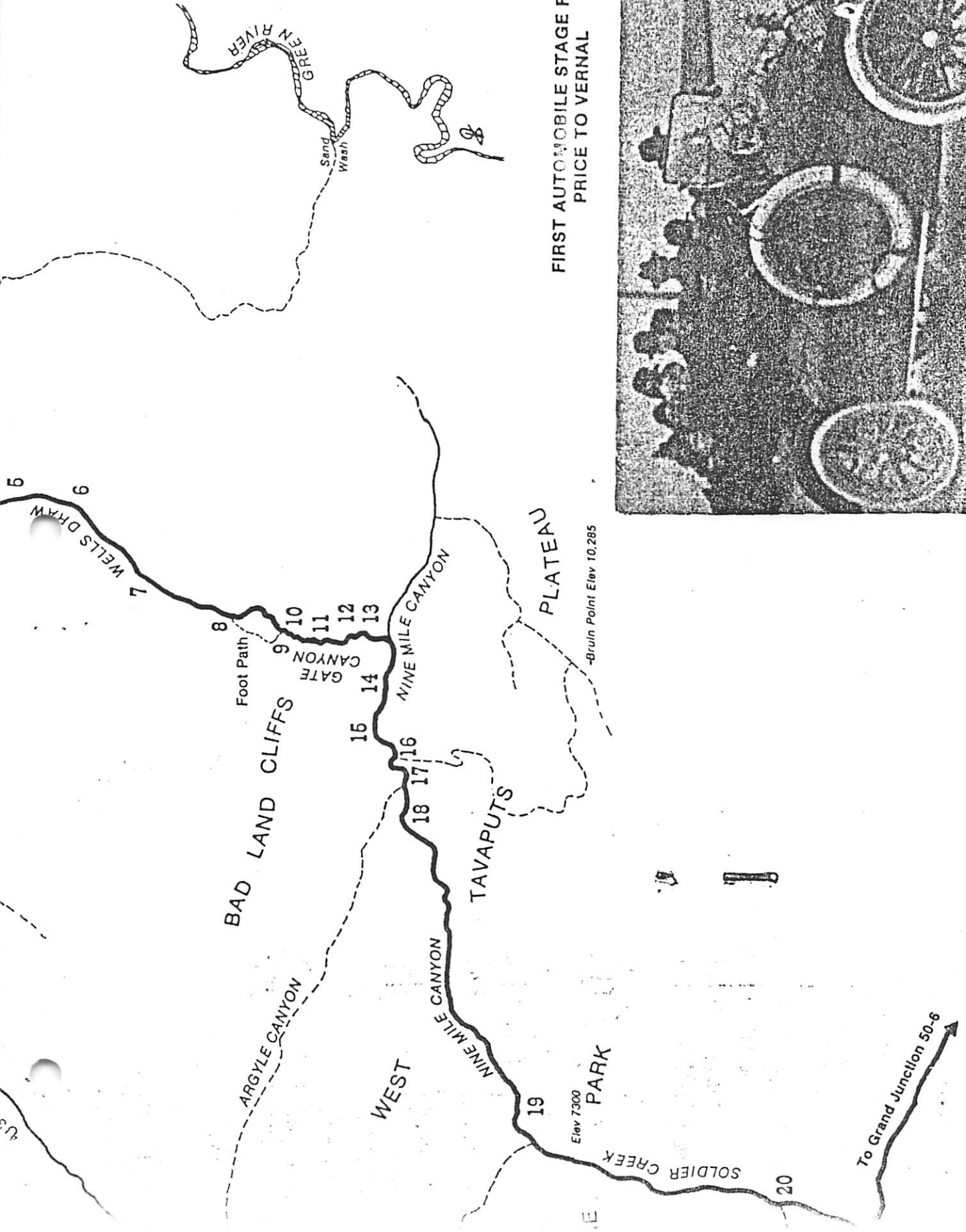
PARRIETTE MINE CIRCA 1900

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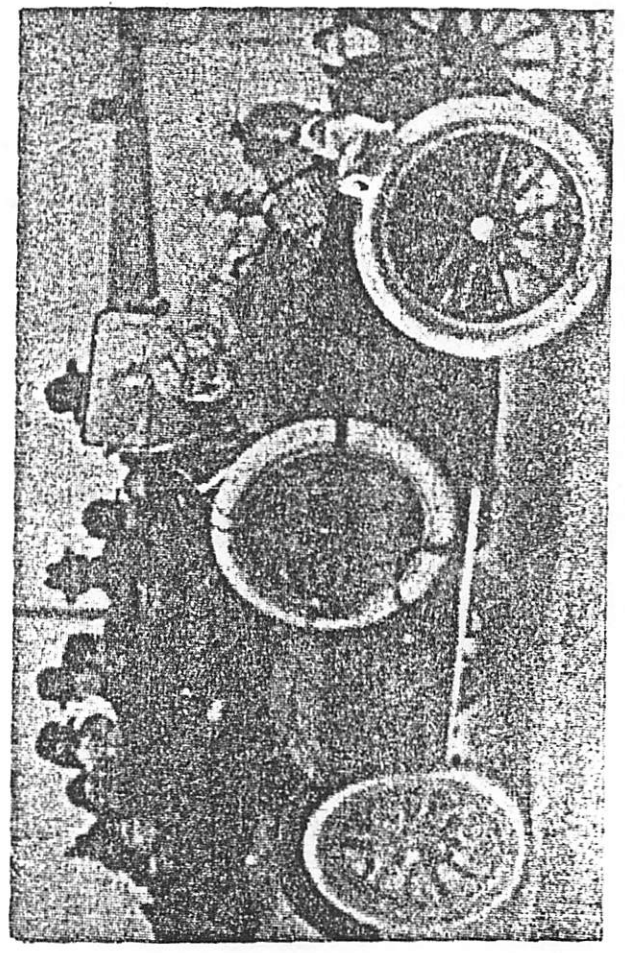
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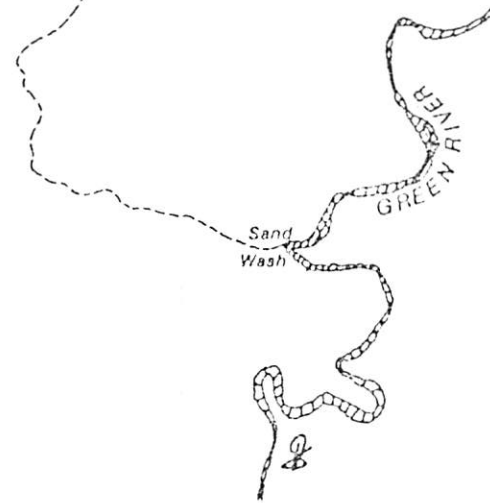
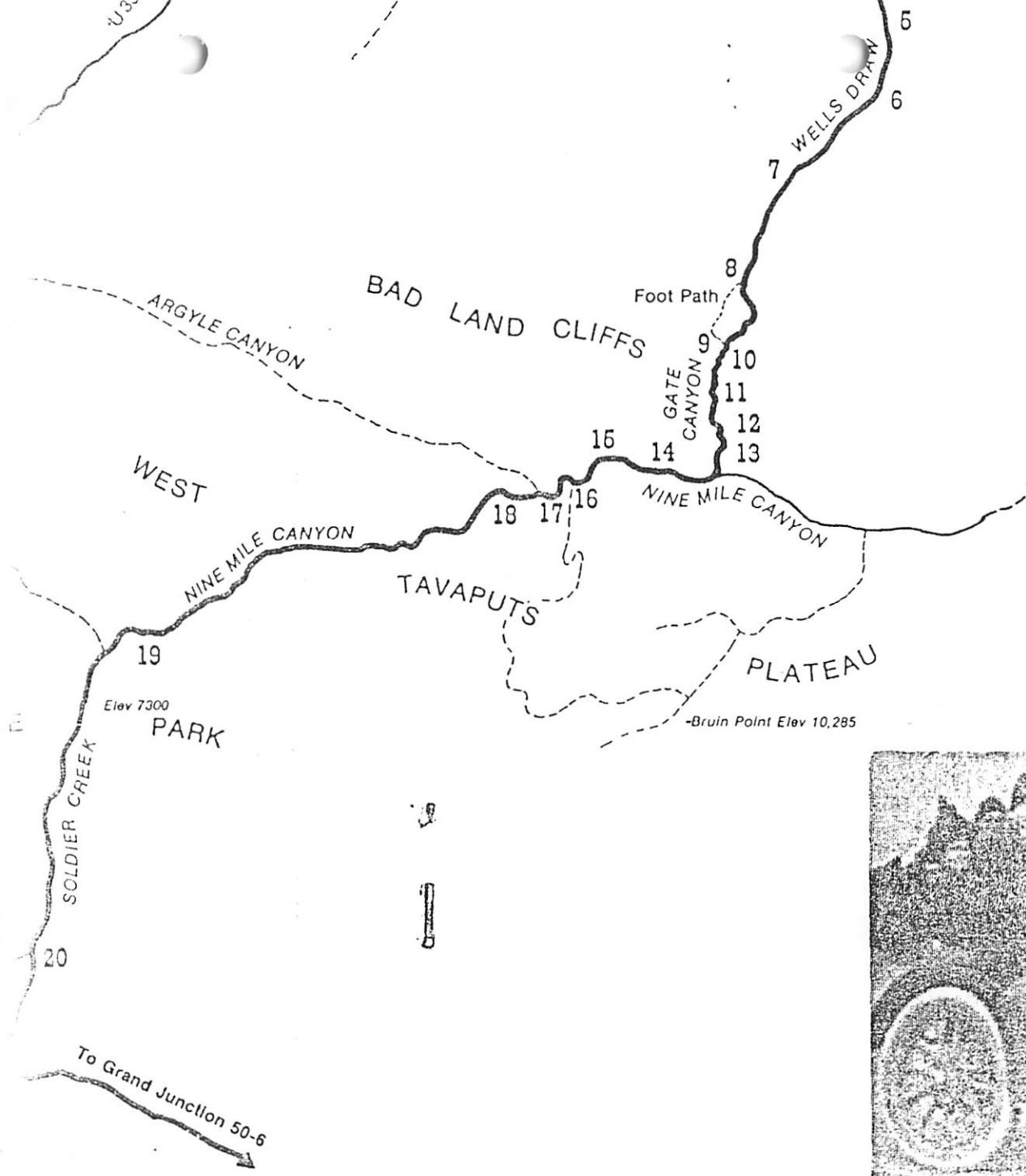
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Named after Sam Gilson who first developed it in the Uintah Basin in the 1870's, Gilsonite was a common load headed for Price and the railhead in the early days of the Uintah Basin. Staple commodities were always in demand and the infant expansion required certain other shipments, but on the return trip to Price a load was not always found. Gilsonite, a solid form of crude oil, was one sure load most always. The ore freighted down this hill road (now improved by oil companies) was 99.6% pure and was base for paints and other industrial purposes and found its way into European markets shortly after the turn of the century. Uintah Basin Gilsonite mines are noted as being the only vertical shaft Gilsonite mines in the world. Gilsonite is still mined in Bonanza Utah while all other mines have shut-down.

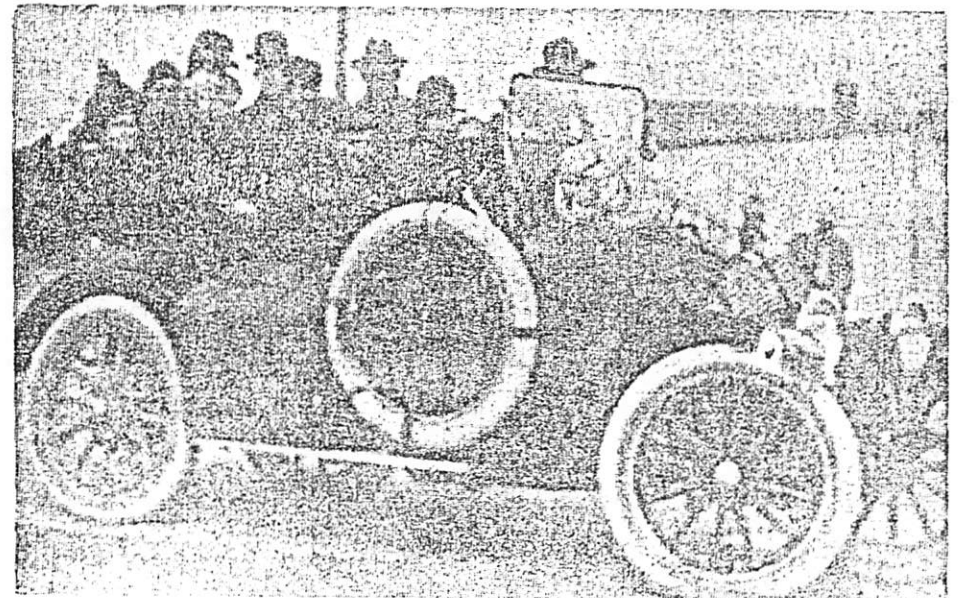


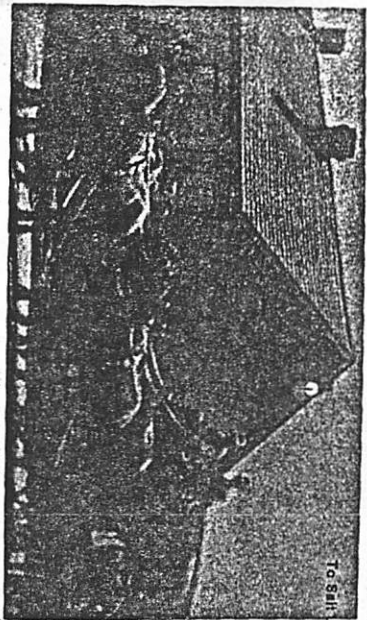
FIRST AUTOMOBILE STAGE FROM
PRICE TO VERNAL





FIRST AUTOMOBILE STAGE FROM
PRICE TO VERNAL





FIRST STAGE FROM
PRICE TO FORT DUCHESNE

To Salt Lake US 40

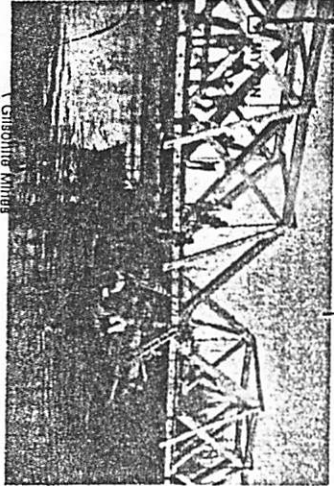
Starvation Reservoir

DUCHESNE
Elev 5515

Flattop Butte

ROOSEVELT

To Vernal US 40
Duchesne



OLD MYTON BRIDGE

Gilchrist Knives

Snake
Wash
GREEN RIVER

ARGYLE CANYON

BAD LAND CLIFFS

Foot Path

GATE CANYON

WELLS DRAW

WEST NINE MILE CANYON

NINE MILE CANYON

TAVAPUTS

PLATEAU

Abund Point Elev 10,285

WHITMORE PARK
Elev 7200

PRICE
Elev 5567

Old Freight Road

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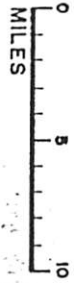
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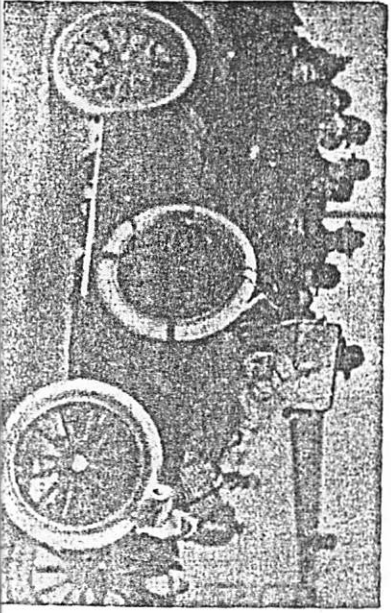
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To Provo 50.6

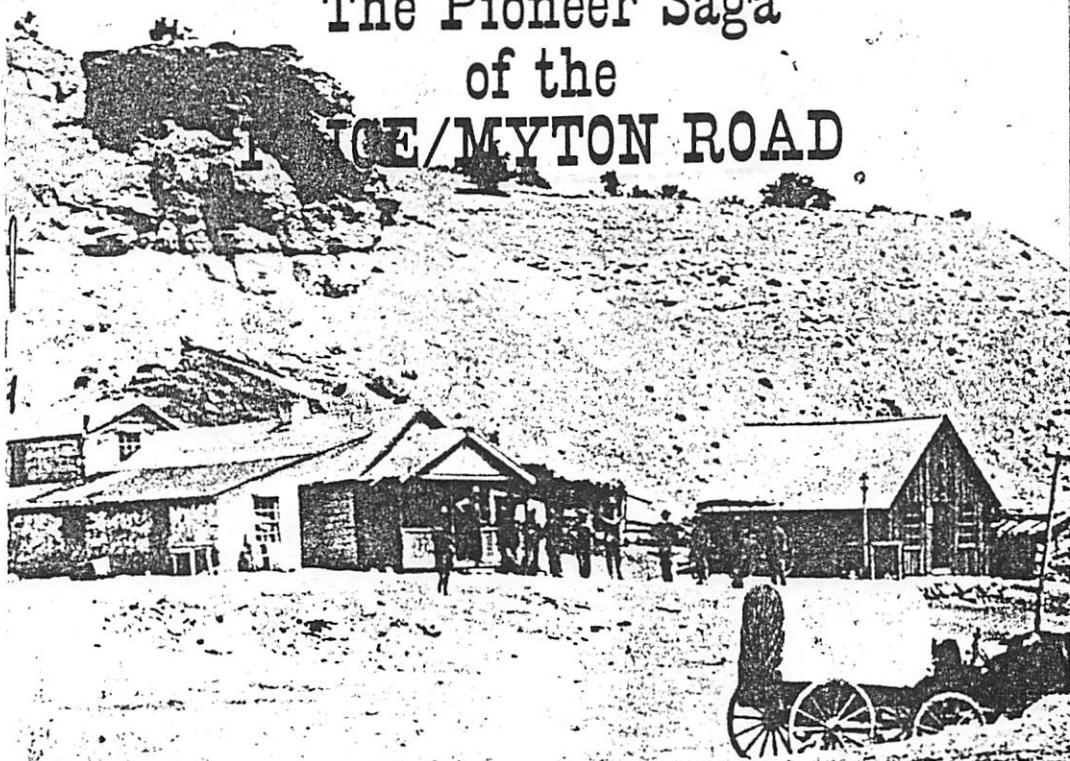
WELLINGTON

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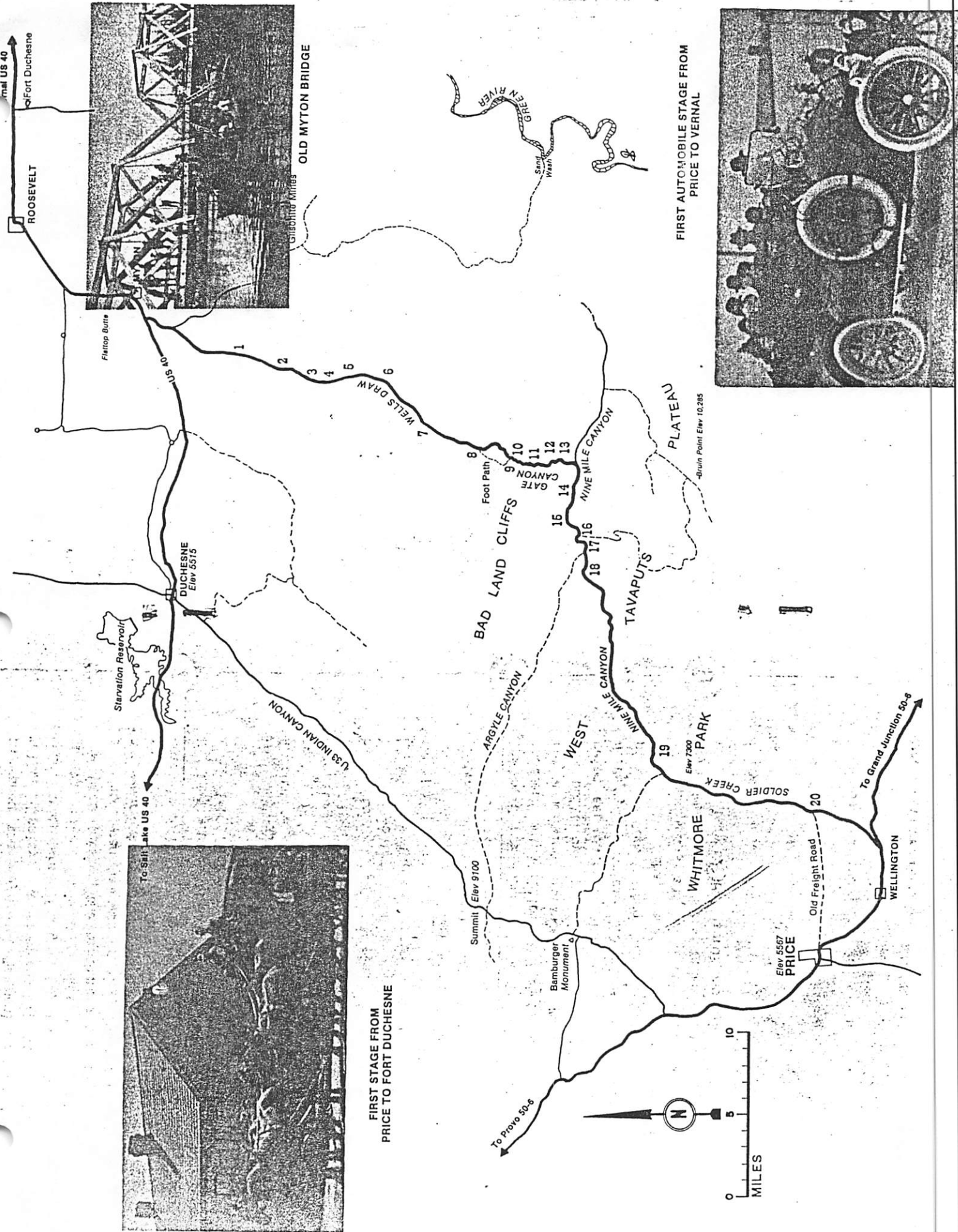
FIRST AUTOMOBILE STAGE FROM
PRICE TO VERNAL

The Pioneer Saga of the PRICE/MYTON ROAD



In the early development of the Uintah Basin of Eastern Utah no other road played a more important role than did the Price/Myton Road through historic Nine-Mile Canyon and the Wells Draw. Built over an authentic Indian trail, the road was carved out of some of the roughest of God's great handiwork by the 9th Cavalry in 1886. These early soldiers would build Fort Duchesne. Though most of the Fort has been dismantled, its legacy has remained with us since its closure in 1912. This is only a small part. The saga of the Price/Myton Road grew as the 'Basin' grew. Feeding an infant expansion, the road commands much of every facet of growth, legend, and human involvement. A prominent historian of this region has said, "I could write three books on the Price/Myton freighters alone, not to mention everything else." (George E. Stewart)

Courtesy of the UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



FIRST AUTOMOBILE STAGE FROM PRICE TO VERNAL



This brochure has been created as part of an Eagle Scout Service Project in conjunction with local area chambers of commerce in Roosevelt, Duchesne, Price, and Vernal Utah. It is designed to be your guide through history. Because it cannot be known whether you are starting your journey from Price or from Myton, we suggest you do the following:

Marker posts have been placed along the route and show numbers keyed to those used in the brochure. Mileage has also been given between stops. Use these resources to identify your location. A map has been provided in the brochure and indicates the areas where markers are to be found and on which side of the road. If you are starting at Price you will want to go south on Highway 50-6 through Wellington for approximately 7.5 miles. The turn-off is to your left and leads you to Nine-Mile Canyon and the historic trail route. You will use the number key in reverse order starting with 20 and going to 0.

If you are beginning your trip at Myton you will need to travel west on Highway 40 for 2 miles. You will be taking the first paved road to your left. Ascending gradual hills, you will pass several homes. At a point 1.6 miles from your turn-off Highway 40 you will see a graveled road veering off to your right. Take this road and use the number key in order 1 through 20. Either direction will take you on one of the most interesting and informative trips you have ever traveled. You will spend about four hours, depending on how much hiking you do and the stops you make, and we are confident you will enjoy your drive.

Almost 900 years ago Anasazi Indians occupied much of this region and many of their structures and rock art remain to be seen in the Nine-Mile Canyon area. This early Fremont culture were part farmer and part hunter. While this brochure does not treat this subject, we suggest you select a companion guide which does. In all of your travels be sure to keep in mind that this entire region is protected by the Federal Antiquities Act. Disturb nothing. "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints." Most of the lands you will visit and the dwellings you will see, are private. Be sure to ask permission before crossing onto them at any time. Thank You, Enjoy Your Trip.

HWY 40

5.3

1

4.2

2

Looking northeast you will see Van Wyck Hill some three miles distant, having a water storage tank on top. While the shortest route to The Bridge (present day Myton) was over the hill as used today, heavier loads could not always pull the grade of this formidable barrier and would go to Van Wyck Hill where a more gradual dugway was used. Early freighters hauled 9000 pounds to the load in their wagons!

This small hill where the road enters and leaves Wells Draw was known as The Pitch. It was so called because of the steep climb it used to be. Buried now under the present road, this incline often caused wagoneers to 'double-team' in order to pull its grade. The ground was too soft to continue down the Wells Draw, and so The Pitch was created. In the flats below was a camp travelers used when staying overnight.



PARRIETTE MINE CIRCA 1900

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Named after Sam Gilson who first developed it in the Uintah Basin in the 1870's, Gilsonite was a common load headed for Price and the railhead in the early days of the Uintah Basin. Staple commodities were always in demand and the infant expansion required certain other shipments, but on the return trip to Price a load was not always found. Gilsonite, a solid form of crude oil, was one sure load most always. The ore freighted down this hill road (now improved by oil companies) was 99.6% pure and was base for paints and other industrial purposes and found its way into European markets shortly after the turn of the century. Uintah Basin Gilsonite mines are noted as being the only vertical shaft Gilsonite mines in the world. Gilsonite is still mined in Bonanza Utah while all other mines have shut-down.

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4

In the mouth of this draw and against the north ledges was built West Point. It was so named because of the young West Point graduate who established a 'look-out' here to make sure the Indians did not leave the reservation. He and his small unit of cavalry soldiers were soon made wise to the fact that the Indians knew many routes by which to leave the reservation and not one followed a road. The young officer closed the camp having learned a lesson in East/West tactics.

1.4

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At this point you will see a short ledge jutting out of a small hill to the east of the road, but within 200 feet. At the base of the cliff you will notice some old wooden posts. It was here at Smokey Ledge that water was first sought by Owen Smith as he attempted to establish the only watering hole between Nine-Mile Canyon and The Bridge (Myton) some 40 miles of dry road! After digging almost 200 feet into the earth, Owen Smith gave up his hopes and hired a water 'witcher' to locate the right spot. In order to serve the stage line it had to be near the half way point. Water was found at the site known as The Wells, further up the road at stopping point number 6.

2.9

6

Owen Smith came here in 1891 with his wife and family of five children. In order to establish an 'oasis' in the middle of forty miles without water, Mr Smith dug 196 feet into the dusty earth, struck water, and established The Wells. The water he struck was not good for human consumption and was only used to water livestock, do washing, etc. Drinking water was hauled from Nine-Mile Canyon or The Bridge (present day Myton) for the next 34 years. The Wells became the overnight stopping place for the stages and the total facility included the stage station, a general store, feed yard, blacksmith shop, a small hotel, and a restaurant. Many distinguished men and women stopped here for the night. Senator Reed Smoot, Emma Lucy Gates, Governor William Spry, Congressman Don B. Colton, Butch Cassidy and other ring leaders of the "Wild Bunch." It was in a small cabin behind the restaurant that an injured man had his arm removed by an army surgeon bound for Fort Duchesne. With only a butcher knife and a kitchen meat saw as his instruments and with six men to hold the patient down, the surgeon saved the man from a death of blood poisoning. The cabin has since been referred to as 'The Hospital.' Like a modern day truck-stop, The Wells often had as many as fifty rigs pull up

2.1

7

to spend the night. A Mr Hamilton who later leased the Wells, displayed a sign showing charges to water horses, cows, sheep etc. Being a dog lover he had at the bottom of the sign, "Dogs Drink Free." An early photograph of The Wells graces the brochure cover page. Very old names and dates can be seen on the ledges here. Please, do not add yours to them, dig, or in any way disturb remaining rock walls of this once busy site. Please, preserve that which is left.

The long efacement of rock you see here is said to resemble a castle. Early in the expansion of the Uintah Basin and prior to the building of The Wells (number6), it was here that the stages from Vernal and Price met at midnight. A campfire was built, a midnight lunch was served, and the horses fed. Passengers and mail bags were exchanged and each stage returned from whence it came. Thus, mail service to the 'Basin' in those days was bi-weekly. When The Wells came into operation, the stages ran every day and mail service was stepped up to daily service. Mail from Salt Lake City went on an Express train which made no stops and arrived in time to get the mail onto the Price/Myton stage before it left. By this method the Uintah Basin had 'next day' delivery on its mail. (Uintah is an Indian word meaning "Land high up where timber grows.")

4.9

8

The next two markers (8 & 9) are placed at the ends of a footpath which follows the route of the old, pre-1920 road, for a walking distance of 1½ miles. This section of road was built by the United States Army as Fort Duchesne was being established. You may walk the path and have someone drive your vehicle 2.3 miles to the next marker post to pick you up. Along this footpath one can appreciate the great labor that went into building the road through use of rock walls and stone culverts. Cuts into the hillside were made with horse drawn implements requiring removal of rock ledges. Be careful and enjoy your hike.

2.3

9

2.7



EARLY CONSTRUCTION CREW

10

If you look down into the wash from where you stand you will see evidence of an old road going along the edge of the hill below. This is part of the original, army built road. Just as it crosses the wash you will notice that the road-bed is pure rock ledge. This is Slick Rock, so named because the moisture and moss that formed on it caused heavy laden wagon wheels to slip, sometimes causing the wagon to go into the deep wash below. More often, a sudden slip would cause a wheel to break. This presented a real problem in that there was no blacksmith shop here in Gate Canyon, and one would have to walk four miles to the nearest forge. Before long someone had left a forge at Slick Rock.



FREIGHTERS ON PRICE/MYTON ROAD

Other passersby left an anvil, tongs, hammer, etc., until a fully stocked forge was in place at this historic site. At the base of the cliff directly across from where you stand, where all the names can be seen on the ledge in black, was built a small rock building to house the forge set-up. Contrast this trust with today's society. Tools left today would soon be stolen. Such was the code of the pioneers.

The flat area below you was known as The Shelf. Horse and mule pack-trains would stop here at night avoiding the lower wash and possible flash floods. It was not used by wagons as they could not pull up to it from the early road. The dugway you now drive on was built by J. Bracken Lee as an early State Road Superintendent and is called the Lee Dugway. The early road followed the wash mainly, and where it passed between the high ledges east of this point, was called The Narrows. The Narrows led to Slick Rock (stop number 10).

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12

It is hard to believe now, but a rock arch once graced Gate Canyon at this point reaching from one side of the ravine to the other. Stages and heavy freight wagons whose weight and iron wheels created vibrations, were subject to small rocks becoming mobile and falling onto them from the arch as they passed under it. People feared the arch was decaying and that someday, someone would be crushed under a massive stone as the arch suddenly collapsed. Pressed by fear, they had the arch dynamited into oblivion about 1905. Newt Stewart, who was hired to demolish the arch, identified this spot as being the location where the arch stood. "It is a shame the arch was destroyed," Mr Stewart said later. "I don't know how long that arch had been there, but considering what it took to blow it down, if it had been there for 5000 years, it would have stood for another 5000." Once destroyed, it could never return. Quite often ranchers, even today, will place a large post each side of the entrance to their ranch-site. Another pole or board is then placed across between the two uprights and displays the name of the ranch and/or the brand. These are referred to as 'Gates.' Because the arch resembled such a gate, this winding canyon became known as 'Gate Canyon,' a name that has stuck with it to this day.

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13

Outlaw Point, as this sharp bend in the road is called, was the legendary sight of what was to be a blood bath slaughter and robbery. Indian Annuities and Army Payroll were bound for the Uintah Basin along this road. The plan of the formed outlaw group was to kill every soldier guarding the monies to leave no witnesses. While Butch Cassidy and the "Wild Bunch" are said to have been invited to join this caper, they declined on the basis of all the killing of which they wanted no part. An informant put the Army wise to the plan. When the strong-box rolled through, the guard had been greatly increased, and the holdup massacre was hastily called off by the men waiting in hiding on the ledges you see around you. If you will look up on the mountain side to the east you will see a four-membered rock formation nicknamed "Mount Rushmore"

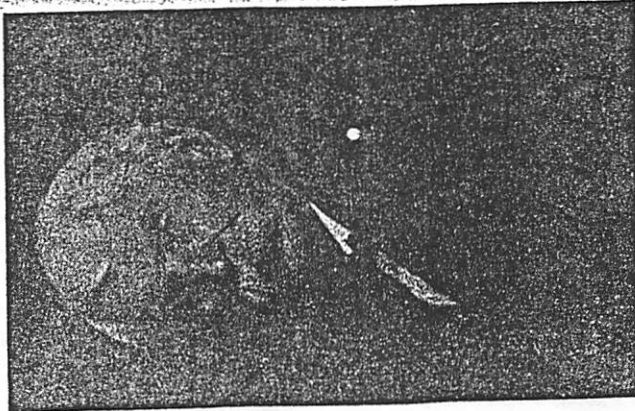
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This ranch-site was first known as Brock's. It was home-steaded by a man of that name and later became a stop for the early stages and freighters. Like most established stops, Brock's had various goods and services for sale. This frequented stop featured a saloon which was housed

in the old cabin next to the road on the south. Pete Francis, who bought the place from Brock and made it into more of a commercial spot, was shot to death in that saloon. One or two bullet holes remain in the walls from gunplay in other episodes. Freighters camped near here as part of their regular journeys between Price and The Bridge (Myton). When Pete Francis was killed, his widow, not wanting to remain and operate the stop any longer, sold out to Preston Nutter in 1902. Nutter, a well-known cattle baron of the State of Utah, wanted the location for a headquarters for his cattle business. He used the 15-room hotel (destroyed by fire years ago) as a bunk house for his men and used other buildings in part of his enterprise as well. The stage stop was moved further up the canyon to the Egan Place and then to the Alger Place.

Preston Nutter built a cattle herd of over 25,000 head and ranged them from here to the Arizona Strip near the Grand Canyon. He controlled hundreds of thousands of acres either through ownership or lease. He died in 1936. The ranch was passed to his daughters, one of whom lived here until her death in the 1970's. The ranch was then sold to Sabine Corporation, a Texas based oil firm. Many histories on Nutter are available. His papers and memoirs are on file at the Special Collections Department of the University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Unlike the 'cowboy' image portrayed on the movie screen, Nutter still led a life reading like a great western novel. He rode a mule instead of a horse, and it is said that he never owned a pair of cowboy boots. Early telegraph equipment used acid cell batteries and was not strong enough to go from the garrison at Fort Duchesne all the way to Price. It was necessary to have a relay station about half way and this was that location. Ed Harmon, who later moved up the canyon to stop number 16 of this brochure, operated



PRESTON NUTTER

Courtesy of the UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

the relay, acting as telegrapher. The stone building you see here, and the log structure next to it, were used by Mr Harmon as his telegraph office, and home, though he lived here only one summer before homesteading in the canyon at the point previously mentioned.

This is known as The Egan Ranch and was used as an early stage stop, but for only a short while. Sleeping quarters were started, but never finished. Late in his life, Frank Alger, who drove the Price/Myton Stage for years, identified this rock building as being that used to house stage horses. The Alger Ranch, just up the road half a mile, was also used as a stage stop, with meals being cooked and served to the passengers. Frank Alger, it is said, had the best stocked general store for miles and even kept "Jelly Beans!"

This home, one of the most beautiful in its day, still stands stately in honor of Ed Harmon who built it and worked the ranch surrounding it. An early school house, which was destroyed by fire long ago, stood nearby and was the 'community events center' for old fashioned "Hoe-Downs." Dances were held to the sound of a lone fiddle and plenty of toe-tapping. Orchards, shrubs, and flowers, made this one of the most beautiful and tranquil places for many miles. The large canyon just down the Nine-Mile Road was named Harmon Canyon after this early telegrapher and rancher of the area.

Looking on the point against the cliffs right next to the road, you will notice a large, balanced rock. Often called Pig Head Rock because it resembles Porky Pig when looking at it from the west, it has been a favorite landmark in Nine-Mile Canyon since the beginning.

The old log buildings you see here are the remains of the old town of Harper. This is where mail was delivered and where voting took place in Nine-Mile Canyon. This ground was homesteaded by Tom Taylor prior to the Army building the road through to Fort Duchesne in the Uintah Basin in 1886. Purchased by Ed Lee, the old homestead became known as Lee Station, a stage stop. It was used also as a rest haven for the hard worked horses which spent out the better part of their lives at a fast gait along the stage line road. It is said that a large and beautiful barn, used for housing the animals, was located here, in addition to what can be seen now. The Lee Station House, built during this time, had running water and a real sink! As you travel in Nine-Mile Canyon you will notice steel

poles holding up what appears to be a single line. These are part of the poles which carried the telegraph lines and are reported to be Civil War surplus shipped by rail from back east. They now carry the telephone line.

19

Whitmore Park, as this wide valley is called, was a winter threat to travelers of the Price/Myton Road due to drifting snows. Pairs of horses on a team would have to be shuttled from the rear forward as one pair after another was tired beating the crusted snow and pawing it to break passage. One old timer reported that after a full day of hard work shoveling snow and changing horses, they could look back and see the smoke curling up from the log still smoldering at the previous night's campsite. At the east end of Whitmore Park is a bridge. It was felt by early travelers that if they could only make it to that bridge, they would make it to the Uintah Basin. On the west end of the Park is the head of Soldier Creek. It was here that a stage stop was built, the first if coming from Price, and marked the beginning or end, depending on your direction of travel, the Soldier Creek Road. This was a particularly dangerous stretch of road, rough and narrow along quite high drops into the creek below. Modern machinery has built the road up on the hillside out of the creek-bed where it once wound its way through this low pass. This was a treacherous section of road for early pioneers who traveled it.

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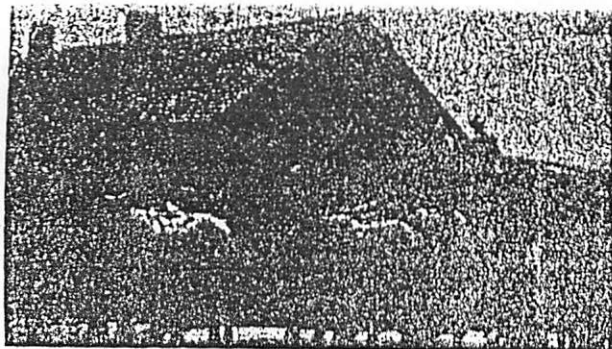
20

At this point, the mouth of Soldier Creek, a camp was set up and used by early freighters and travelers along this historic route. From this point the road did not go into Wellington as today, but went over the foothills to the west in a more direct route to and from Price. One could camp here overnight and go into Price the next morning, unload, reload, and return for a second night's camp before starting the three-day journey into the Uintah Basin via Nine-Mile Canyon and the Wells Draw. It is said that a round trip over this historic road took one week on a wagon. If you were lucky you earned about \$80.00. Chosen for its low passes not exceeding 7400 feet altitude, this early route has long been referred to as a "Winter Road." Indian Canyon's road began taking the Price/Myton Road's traffic as early as 1915 though the mail was still shipped this route during the winter months due to heavy snows on Indian Canyon's summit. It was not unusual to see mail and other shipments going through on the Price/Myton Road late in

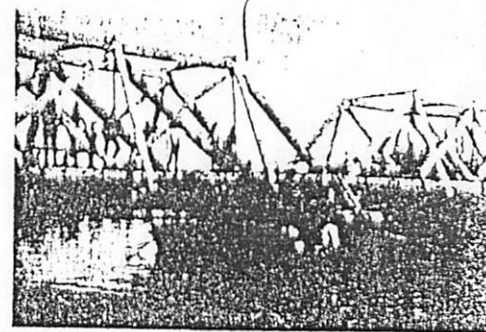
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Wellington
turnoff

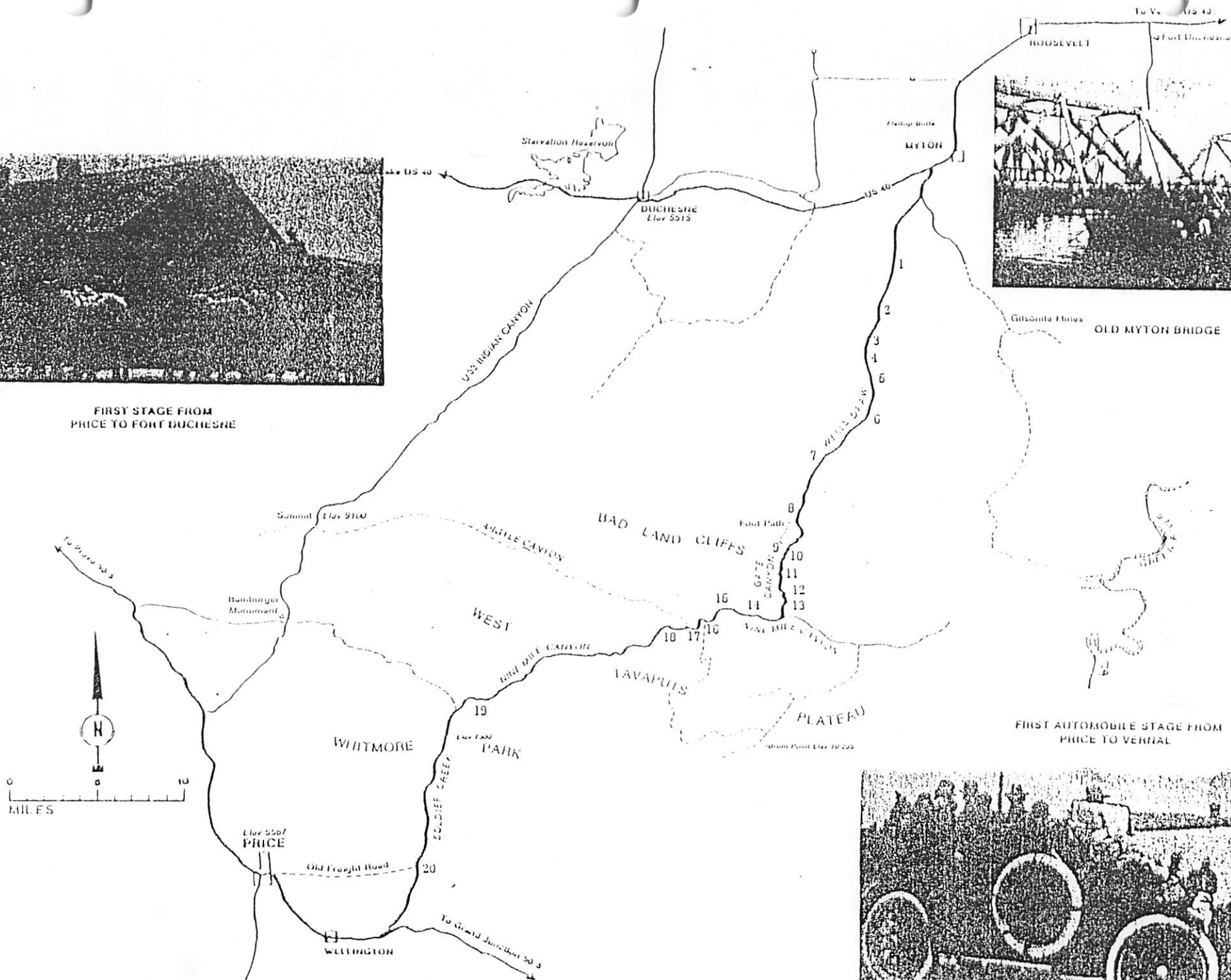
the 1920's.



FIRST STAGE FROM
PRICE TO FORT DUCHESNE

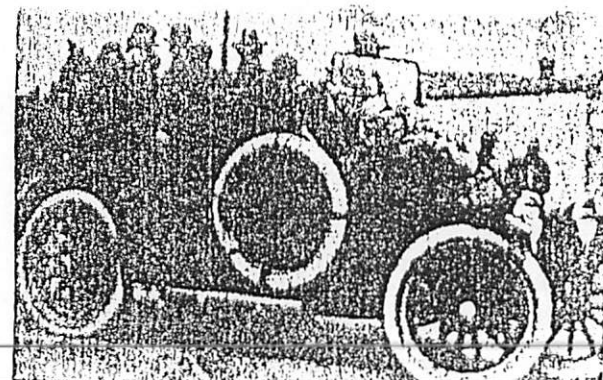


OLD MYTON BRIDGE

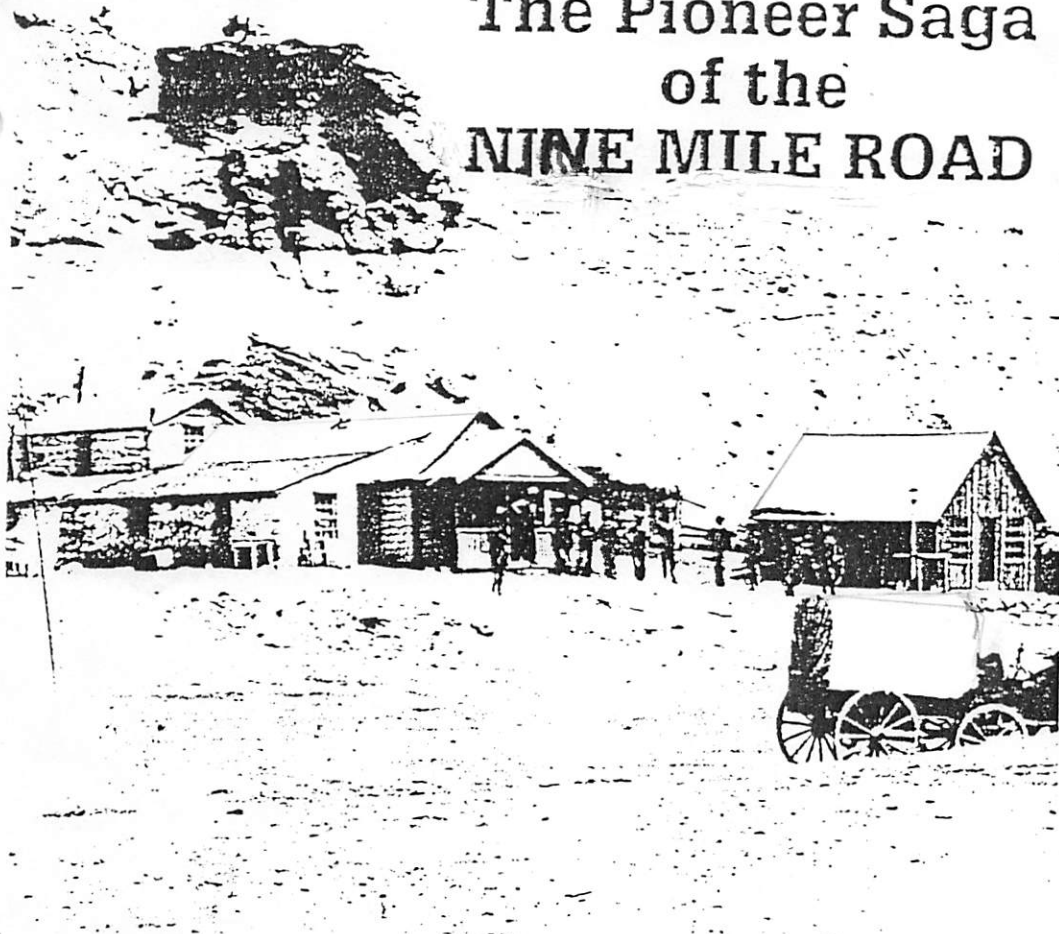


Nine Mile Road

FIRST AUTOMOBILE STAGE FROM
PRICE TO VERNAL



The Pioneer Saga of the NINE MILE ROAD



INTRODUCTION

In the early development of the Uintah Basin of Eastern Utah, no other road played a more important role than did the Price-Myton through Wells Draw and historic Nine Mile Canyon, from which it takes its name. Its influence is evident in most every facet of early growth, legend, and human interest between Carbon County and the Uintah Basin, leaving a common heritage between them. Carved from some of God's roughest handiwork by the all-black 9th U.S. Cavalry, Nine Mile Road construction coincided the building of Fort Duchesne on the Uintah frontier in 1886. Following an authentic Indian trail, the road linked the Fort with the nearest railhead and telegraph line and, for the next quarter-century, was the main road into the "Basin". The stagecoach and mail went over this route along with freight shipments that built communities. When the Uintah and Ouray Ute Indian Reservation opened to white

settlement in 1905, over 15,000 homesteaders trod this path in search of a new home. One could not go more than a ¼ mile without meeting someone either coming or going, and the immigrant road could be traced through the barrens by the dust trails streaming skyward. The saga of the Nine Mile Road surges from the impulse of that expansion.

HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

A map provided on the back page of this brochure shows where numbered markers are to be found at historic sites along the tour route. These posts are number-keyed to information in the brochure about each site. Mileage between stops is also given. Use these resources to identify your location. The total distance is 80 miles, most of which is dirt road. You should plan about three hours travel time, more if you stop for pictures or to hike. It is recommended that you fill your fuel tanks and carry a properly inflated spare tire. Please do not litter. If you carry it in, carry it out. Starting from Price or Myton, you will find this to be one of your most interesting and informative outings ever. Drive carefully, enjoy your trip.

If you are starting from Price, go south 7.5 miles on Highway 50-6 through Wellington. Exit left at the large gas station; a *Back Country Byway* sign and information kiosk will greet you. You are on the historic trail headed for Nine Mile Canyon. Follow the paved road. Use the number key in reverse order, starting with 20 and going to zero.

If you are starting from Myton, travel west on Highway 40 for 1.6 miles. Exit onto the first paved road to your left and go .3 miles. You will notice a *Back Country Byway* sign and information kiosk; you are on the historic trail headed for Nine Mile Canyon. Leaving the kiosk, go 1.4 miles. Ascending gradual hills, you will pass several homes, cross a canal, and come to a historic monument. Take the paved road to the right of the monument and use the number key in order 1 to 20.

Anasazi Indians occupied much of this region almost 900 years ago and many of their structures and rock art remain to be seen in Nine Mile Canyon. This brochure does not treat this subject. You may want to select a companion guide that does.

The Federal Antiquities Act protects this entire region. Disturb nothing. "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints." Most lands and dwellings you will see are private. Be sure to ask permission before crossing onto them at any time.

THANK YOU

Courtesy of the UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



1

Looking northeast you will see "Van Wyck Hill," about three miles away with a water storage tank on top. While the shortest route to the Bridge (today's Myton) was over the hill as used today, heavier loads could not always pull the grade of this formidable barrier and would go to Van Wyck Hill where they used a more gradual dugway. Early freight rigs, like that shown on the right, consisted of a wagon and "pup" and hauled 9000 pounds combined load weight!



DES PITTS FREIGHT LINE

2

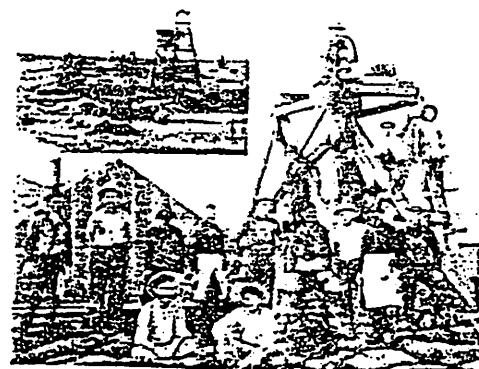
This small hill where the road enters and leaves Wells Draw is "The Pitch." The ground was too soft to continue down the draw and travelers chose to make an abrupt ascent at this point to the flats above. Buried now under the present road, this incline was so steep that it often caused wagoners to double-team to pull its grade. Tired horses could not pull this hill. Arriving here in the evening, exhausted after a day's work, man and beast had to lay over. In the flats below was a campsite used by travelers for that purpose.

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The road descending the adjacent hill came from the Gilsonite mines nine miles to the east. Named after Sam Gilson, who first developed it in the Uintah Basin in the 1870's, Gilsonite is a 99.6 percent pure hydrocarbon. It has many industrial purposes including base for paints. When mining started in 1889 it became a common load freighted to Price and the railhead. Staple commodities and other supplies were always in demand at Fort Duchesne and the Indian agencies at Whiterocks and Ouray, and the infant expansion required certain other shipments as well. Because of these needs, wagons coming into the Basin were always full. On the return trip to Price a load was not always found. Gilsonite was one sure load most always and shipments even went into European markets. Uintah Basin Gilsonite mines are the only vertical-shaft Gilsonite mines in the world. Some are still worked at Bonanza, Utah; all other local mines have shut down.

PARRIETTE MINE CIRCA 1900



0.4

4

"West Point," built in the mouth of this draw and against the north ledges, got its name because a young Academy graduate established a check point here. He wanted to make sure the Indians did not leave the reservation. Ute boys teased him, riding by quickly in the dark, making lots of noise. In pursuit, the lieutenant would meet the same young men calmly riding back. "Oh yes, they went that way," the boys would reply when questioned, sending the soldiers on a wild-goose-chase. The lieutenant soon realized his efforts were folly; Utes knew many routes by which to leave the Basin, not one followed a road. The camp closed.

1.4

5

At this point you will see a short ledge jutting out of a small hill to the east of the road but within 200 feet. It was here at "Smokey Ledge" that Owen Smith first tried to establish the only watering hole between Minnie Maud Creek, in Nine Mile Canyon, and the Duchesne River at Myton. Some 35 miles of dry road lay between these water sources. Saddle horses and light rigs could make the distance without water, but not hard-worked freight teams. Early freighters had to haul water with them, diminishing their pay load by the equivalent weight of the water. After digging more than 150 feet into the earth without finding water, Owen Smith gave up his attempt. He hired a "witcher" to locate the right spot to dig and find his elixir of the desert. He found it at the site known as "The Wells," further up the road at stopping point number six.

2.9

6

Owen Smith came here in 1891 with his wife and family of five children. To establish an "oasis" in the middle of 35 miles without water, Mr. Smith dug 185 feet into the dusty earth, struck water, and established "The Wells." The water, brackish and not good for human consumption, was only used for such things as watering livestock and doing laundry. But there was plenty of water. Cattle herds as large as 500 head watered in one stop; the well never went dry. Mr. Hamilton, who operated The Wells starting in 1907, displayed a sign showing charges to water horses, cattle, and sheep. Being a dog lover, he had at the bottom of the sign, "Dogs Drink Free." Hauled of necessity for the next 34 years, drinking water came from Minnie Maud Creek in Nine Mile Canyon, or from the Duchesne River. Besides The Wells, a sheep shearing corral and dipping vat sat in the mouth of the canyon across the draw. It serviced 8000 head of sheep annually. The Wells became a favorite layover of early teamsters. Like a modern-day truck stop, as many as 50 rigs would pull up here for the night, and the stagecoach made an overnight stop as well. Life at The Wells seethed with excitement. Many distinguished men and women slumbered within its walls: Senator Reed Smoot, Emma Lucy Gates, Governor William Spry, Congressman Don B. Colton, and Butch Cassidy and other ring leaders of the "Wild Bunch." The total facility included an eight-room hotel, general store, hay house, blacksmith shop, and restaurant. An early photograph of The Wells graces the brochure

2.1

cover. In the small cabin behind the main house an injured man had his arm removed by an army surgeon bound for Fort Duchesne. With only a butcher knife and a kitchen meat saw as his instruments, and with 4-5 men holding the patient down, he amputated the man's gangrenous arm, saving him from a death of blood poisoning. After that the cabin became known as "The Hospital." Seen on the ledges here are very old names and dates. Please, do not add yours to them. Dig, or in any way disturb remaining rock walls of this once busy site. Let's preserve what remains.

The long escarpment of ledge you see here some early travelers thought looked like Buckingham Palace, and they called it "Castle Rock." Others called it "Cliff Station." Starting in 1888, before the building of The Wells (No. 6), it was here that light mail wagons from Vernal and Price met at midnight. Though not a stage line per se, they often carried a passenger or two. There were no buildings here. A campfire was built; a meal was served; the horses were fed. Then, drivers exchanged passengers and mail bags and returned to their point of origin. Mail service into the Basin was bi-weekly. In 1889 a daily stage began service and took the postal contract as well. Mail from Salt Lake City now went on an express train to Price. Making no stops, it arrived in time for the mail to leave with the Price-Myton stage at 8:00 am. Thus, the Uintah Basin had next-day delivery on its mail from the State's capital. "Uintah," an English homonym for a Ute conjunction, means "land at the foot of the mountains where the pines trail off."

Markers 8 & 9 are at opposite ends of a footpath following the pre-1920's road for a walking distance of 1 1/4 miles. This section of road is believed to be part of the original 1886 military road. Some claim it was built decades later, ca 1917. It may have been early military, abandoned for the present route at some time and resurrected in the teens, then promptly abandoned again. Hiking, you will see retaining walls and culverts made of stone that help one appreciate the great labor that went into building the road. Cuts into the hillside often required removal of ledgerrock by blasting and use of horse-drawn implements. You may walk the path and have someone drive your vehicle 2.3 miles to the next marker post to pick you up. Be careful and enjoy your hike.



EARLY CONSTRUCTION CREW

If you look down into the wash from where you stand you will see evidence of an old road going along the edge of the hill below. This is part of the original army-built road. You will notice that the roadbed, just as it crosses the wash, is pure ledgerrock. This is "Slick Rock." A constant seeping of water flowed over this ledge and moss and slime grew on the surface of the rock, making it very slippery. Wheels on heavily laden wagons would slip in this muck, sometimes causing the wagon to go into the deep wash below. More often, a sudden slip ended with an equally abrupt stop as the iron rim grated on bare sandstone. The inertia caused wooden wheels to buckle, or metal rims to break. This presented a real problem because repair required access to a forge. There was no blacksmith shop here in Gate Canyon and one would have to walk four miles to the nearest one. Before long, to remedy this situation, someone left a forge at Slick Rock. Other passersby left an anvil, tongs, hammer, etc., until a fully stocked forge was in place at this historic site. At the base of the cliff, directly across the ravine from where you stand—where names in black appear on the ledge—a small rock building housed the forge setup. Contrast this trust with today's society. Tools left today would soon be stolen.



FREIGHTERS ON PRICE/MYTON ROAD

Here the road descends "Lee Dugway." Named after J. Braken Lee, it was built by him while serving as an early State road superintendent. Before the dugway the early road mainly followed the wash. The site where it passed between the high ledges east of this point is "The Narrows." The Narrows led to Slick Rock (stop number 10). The flat area below you is "The Shield" and holds park trails which are very difficult to find. The lower wash and possible flash floods. Wagons did not use it because they could not pull up to it from the early road deep in the wash.

Stretching angularly across the road (A-B), a stone arch once spanned the ravine at this point. It was destroyed about 1905. Iron-rimmed wagon wheels sent a shutter into the ground, especially when passing over solid ledgerrock. These vibrations caused small rocks atop the arch to work their way to the edge where they sometimes

0.5 fell onto the wagons passing underneath. Some people, the stagecoach company in particular, became convinced that the arch was decaying. Owners envisioned that someday someone would be crushed under a massive stone as the arch collapsed. Pressed by fear, they had the arch destroyed. Newt Stewart, who proponents hired to do the blasting, identified this as the spot where the landmark stood. You will notice a few names left by early travelers who sat atop the arch. The area of light-colored rock below them is where the arch met the canyon wall. "It is a shame the arch was destroyed," Mr. Stewart said later. "I don't know how long that arch had been there, but considering what it took to blow it down, if it had been there for 5000 years, it would have stood for another 5000." Once destroyed it could never return.

By placing a tall post each side of the road and another pole or board across—between the two uprights—ranchers have always built unique entrances to their ranch sites. These often display the name of the ranch and its brand, and are referred to as "gates." Because the arch resembled such a gate, this winding canyon became known as "Gate Canyon," a name that has stuck with it to this day.

13

1.3 This sharp bend in the road is "Outlaw Point," legendary site of what was to be a bloodbath slaughter and robbery of Indian annuities and army payroll bound for the Uintah Basin. The plan of the ad hoc outlaw group was to ambush and kill all twenty soldiers in the escort guard, leaving no witnesses. While some members of the Wild Bunch allegedly took part in this scheme, Butch Cassidy, Elza Lay, and Sundance did not. They knew the army would hunt them relentlessly for such murderous actions. An informant put the army wise to the plan, and when the strongbox rolled through the guard was doubled. The highwaymen, waiting in hiding on the ledges you see around you, hastily called off the holdup massacre. Some think that Butch may have tipped off the army himself, realizing that he probably would be blamed for the crime whether he was really there or not. On the mountainside to the east you will see a single rock formation having four parts. This is nicknamed "Mount Rushmore."

14

This ranch site, first known as "Brock's," was homesteaded by a man of that name and became a stop for the first stagecoaches. Freighters camped along the cliffs just below the ranch, resting their teams before attempting the arduous climb up Gate Canyon. Pete Francis saw them as potential customers, bought the place from Brock, and developed it commercially. The stop offered among other things, a fifteen-room hotel, destroyed by fire in the 1930's, and a saloon, housed in the old cabin next to the road on the south. Francis allegedly was shot to death in that saloon. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Francis did not want to remain and operate the stop any longer. In 1902 she sold out to Preston Nutter, who for fifty years was a well-known cattle baron in the state of Utah.

2.8 Nutter wanted the location as headquarters for his large cattle enterprise. He closed the saloon and used the hotel as a bunk house. The stage stop moved further up the canyon to the Egan place (No. 15) and then to the Alger Ranch. With the purchase of Brock's came a lone peacock. A mate was found for the bird and they multiplied rapidly. Peacocks and the Nutter Ranch soon became synonymous. Preston Nutter controlled hundreds of thousands of acres either through ownership or lease, and stories have it that he really did not know just how many cattle he had, there were so many. More reliable sources put the figure at somewhere over 25,000 head. They ranged from here to the Arizona strip on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Unlike the cowboy image portrayed on the movie screen, Preston Nutter rode a mule instead of a horse, and supposedly, never owned a pair of cowboy boots. Nevertheless, he led a life that reads like a great western novel. At age 58, Nutter married Katherine Fenton, manager of Colorado Springs' Postal Telegraph. She had a homestead at Ioka, in the Uintah Basin, and had met Mr. Nutter in her travels back and forth. The small cabin in the field behind the block buildings is her homestead cabin from Ioka; family moved it here in the 1960's. When Preston Nutter died in 1936, Katherine kept the ranch and passed it on to her daughters, one of whom lived here until her death in 1977. A short time later the ranch was sold to an oil company interested in the tar sands found on some of its property.

Before electricity, telegraph equipment got its power from acid cell batteries. These were not strong enough to send a message from the garrison at Fort Duchesne all the way to Price. It was necessary to have a relay station about half way, and this was that location. The stone building against the cliff, and the log cabin next to it, were part of that telegraph relay system. The Cabin housed the relay equipment and quartered the soldiers assigned to be caretakers and telegraphers. Ed Harmon, a civilian contract telegrapher who came into Nine Mile Canyon later, laid up the little rock building. He lived in it while building his home further up the canyon at stop number 16 of this brochure.



PRESTON NUTTER

Courtesy of the UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

15

This was the "Egan Ranch," an early stagecoach stop—albeit only briefly. Owners began construction of sleeping quarters but they never reached completion. Late in his life, Frank Alger, who drove the Price—Myton stage for

2.3

16

years, identified this rock building as that used to house the stagecoach horses. His ranch, just up the road half a mile, next became the stage stop, serving meals to the passengers and boasting a store. Acclaimed the best-stocked in miles, "Alger's General Store" even sold Jelly Beans! Most Nine Mile Canyon residents sold some type of service: forge work, feed, baked goods, butter and milk, etc.

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This home, exceptionally beautiful in its day, still stands in stately honor of Ed Harmon, who built it and worked the ranch surrounding it. Orchards, shrubs, and flowers made this one of the most beautiful and tranquil places for many miles. To the south looms "Harmon Canyon," named after this early telegrapher and rancher of the area.

Just to the right of the Harmon home, Nine Mile Canyon residents realized their dream of having a "real" school house. It was a one-room frame structure built about 1901. Against State school rules, it doubled as a community events center, hosting many old-fashioned hoe-downs. Left vacant, the school fell victim to an arsonist's match years ago.

1.5

18

On the point next to the road you will see a large, balanced rock. Said to resemble Porky Pig when looked at from the west, most call it "Pig Head Rock". Disney's porker didn't exist for early freighters. They thought it looked like a wad of gum on a bed post and dubbed it "The Giant's Chew of Gum." It is one of Nine Mile's most noted landmarks.

13.2

19

Nine Mile's town of "Harper" spread out from here down the canyon for about a mile. Mail deliveries and voting took place in the old log buildings you see here. Tom Taylor homesteaded this ground before the Army built the road through to Fort Duchesne and the Uintah Basin in 1886. Purchased by Ed Lee, the old homestead became known as "Lee Station," a stage stop. It was a rest haven for the hard-worked horses that spent the better part of their lives at a fast gait along the stageline road. A large and beautiful barn housed the recuperating horses and a second, the currently running teams. The Lee Station House, built during this time, had running water and a "real" sink.

Starting sometime before 1895, residents of Nine Mile Canyon struggled to keep a school district going. The first school house, built of logs by residents, sat in the mouth of Argyle Canyon, just down the road ½ mile. Moved to Wellington in the 1930s, it later burned. The steel poles in the Canyon, installed by the army ca 1886, are Civil War surplus shipped from the East. They first carried the telegraph line. This telegraph line became the telephone line into the Basin in 1907 and remained until 1917. The poles have since serviced a local line only.

6.5

20

This wide valley is Whitmore Park. It was a winter threat to travelers of the Nine Mile Road due to drifting snow. Pairs of horses on a team would have to be shuttled from the rear forward as one pair after another exhausted themselves beating the crusted snow, pawing it to break passage. Wallace Dennis freighted with his father in 1908. He reported that after a full day of hard work shoveling snow and changing horses, they could look back and see the smoke curling up from the log still smoldering at the previous night's campsite less than a mile away. Snow was more than three feet deep, and Wallace slept in a snow cave to escape the wind. Their feed expended, the horses ate the bristles on a large bundle of brooms meant for a merchant in the Basin. "Squaw Bridge" spanned the gully at the east end of the Park. Early travelers felt that if they could make it to that bridge, they could make it into the Uintah Basin. Stagecoach stops operated about every twenty miles along the road. The first one encountered, if coming from Price, was at the west end of the Park. At the head of Soldier Creek, its location marked the upper end of Soldier Creek Pass. This pass covered a twelve-mile stretch of particularly dangerous road. It mainly followed the creek bed, but occasionally diverged along rough and narrow passages skirting dropoffs into the creek below.

10.0

"Soldier Creek Camp," used by early freighters and travelers along this historic route, sat here in the mouth of the canyon. The road did not go into Wellington as today; it went over the foothills to the west in a more direct route to and from Price. One could camp here overnight and go into Price the next morning, unload, reload, and return for a second night's camp. This allowed for a rested start on the three-day journey into the Uintah Basin via Nine Mile Canyon and Wells Draw. A round trip from Fort Duchesne over this historic road took one week on a wagon. If you were lucky you earned about \$80.00. Chosen for its low passes not exceeding 7400 feet altitude, this early route has long been considered all season. The new Indian Canyon road into Duchesne began taking the Nine Mile Road's traffic as early as 1915. The mail still came along this route during the winter months due to heavy snow on Indian Canyon's summit; it was not unusual to see mail and other shipments going through on the Nine Mile Road late in the 1920's.

Wellington
turnoff

This brochure was originally created in 1984 as an Eagle Scout Service Project by Mike Ross of Troop 256, Myton, Utah (Utah National Parks Council, BSA). It was written by H. Bert Jenson, Myton, and was revised 4/93. It is held in perpetuity for reprint by any interested group. Reprints can be ordered by contacting The Ink Spot, Roosevelt, Utah. This printing done in partnership with:

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**Duchesne
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4.9

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2.7



EARLY CONSTRUCTION CREW

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FREIGHTERS ON PRICE/MYTON ROAD

11

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1.0

12

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